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ABSTRACT

Trade and industrial (T & I) occupational programs require teachers who are occupationally competent. Because of this premise, all states select teachers on the basis of their occupational expertise in spite of the possible limitation of little formal education in a teacher education program. Thus, provisions are made to hire teachers from industrial settings. A substantial number of teachers enter the profession after working a number of years in industry. From the teacher's perspective, this transition from working in skilled occupations to working in public education settings constitutes an important career change. Given the age of most of these teachers, this transition frequently involves what has come to be known as a midlife career change. Understanding the decision-making processes and factors influencing these decisions provides valuable information both to prospective teachers and to their potential employers. A statewide study of 35 male trade and industrial teachers in Indiana utilized questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The research showed that the subjects' primary reasons for choosing to teach were related to personal needs--desire to work with young people, desire to have a challenge, desire to make a difference. Their decisions were often spurred by teaching experiences in industry. From these findings are drawn suggestions for recruitment, teacher selection, and the administrator's influence over the work environment. (Findings are analyzed with accompanying practical tips in a hand-out type format.) (KC)

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T & I Teachers: Factors Influencing Their Decision to Teach

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Trade and industrial occupational programs require teachers who are occupationally competent. Because of this premise, all states select teachers on the basis of their occupational expertise in spite of the possible limitation of little formal education in a teacher education program. Thus, provisions are made to hire teachers from industrial settings. A substantial number of teachers enter the profession after working a number of years in industry.

From the teacher's perspective, this transition from working in skilled occupations to working in public education settings constitutes an important career change. Given the age of most of these teachers, this transition frequently involves what has come to be known as a mid-life career change (Sheehy, 1977; Geller, 1981). Understanding the decision processes and factors influencing these decisions provides valuable information both to prospective teachers and their potential employers. The purpose of this paper is to offer practical suggestions to administrators based on knowledge generated from a statewide study of mid-life career changers (teachers) in trade and industrial occupations within Indiana. While the details of the study will be briefly mentioned, our primary intention is to use the findings from the study to illuminate their practical utility. Suggestions are offered which can affect recruitment, selection, and the administrators' influence over the work environment.

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Overview of the Study

A small sample of 35 male trade and industrial teachers representing 14 occupational areas was used. The teachers represented urban, suburban, and rural secondary school settings. They ranged in age from 30 to 49 with an average of 14.3 years industrial experience. Since the study focused on mid-life decisions, it was important that these teachers be relatively new to the field of teaching. Thus, their average experience in teaching was 2.7 years.

The small sample size was intentional since an intensive interview method was used to generate the data. The interview was (a) structured (e.g., specific questions were asked but follow-up probes based on the teachers' initial answers were used to encourage elaboration of their responses) and (b) uniformly administered (except for the probes). All of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed to allow for the aggregation and summarization of responses. Two major themes of questions were built into the interview: (a) What factors lead to the teachers' mid-life change decision? and (b) What factors influenced their decision to teach? The interview transcripts were analyzed by classifying responses within these two questions.

Findings

The study's findings appeared to fall within two broad theoretical constructs. First, the decision to change appeared to be related in large part to need theory primarily framed by Maslow (1954). The second construct of importance was the influence to teach which appeared to be closely related to job satisfaction and agree most consistently with the Herzberg (1966) job satisfaction theory which distinguishes between hygiene and motivational factors.

The implications of these findings will be developed in the following sections and handouts will be available which provide insight into how this information can be used for managing occupational programs.

Teaching in the private sector. A substantial number of teachers (74.3%) experienced teaching in the industrial environment. Usually this experience involved mentoring other employees or providing inhouse short term task specific training. What appears to be a critical factor, however, was the insight the future teachers acquired from this experience. In all cases, they mentioned the positive impact this experience had in helping them assess their interest in teaching. Thus, the encounter served as a sample or trial experience which later came to influence the major career change by suggesting the kind of people centered contact and learning interaction with the teacher's pivotal role which is so fundamental to the teaching-learning process.

The impact of this limited, industry experience on the eventual decision to change is valuable information for recruitment and selection processes. Administrators should explore the potential teacher's previous opportunity to serve in a teaching capacity, assess their insight about this experience and, if possible, determine the strength of this impact on the prospective teacher's thinking.

Personal need. A diverse array of needs were evident by the teachers' responses. While one might expect the usual economic conditions (e.g., laid-off, medical reasons, need for greater income) the majority of the teachers reflected needs which were much more idealistic in emphasis (e.g., self-improvement, desire to work with young people, looking for a challenge, trying something new, etc.). Thus, the teachers' needs were not so much imposed or structural as one of seeking the opportunity to attain a position offering greater opportunities for self-realization.

This insight about the idealistic need to fulfill one's self through work represents another important line of thought for administrators. It can, for example, help administrators plan a recruitment effort for new teachers and identify factors for structuring interview questions which might explore a person's needs in relationship to the opportunity to fulfill this need through teaching. Understanding the importance of personal need will provide perspective on a person's long term potential for teaching. Clearly, the need for personal satisfaction is important for the mid-life job change and the person often has a clear perspective on the importance of this need.

Satisfaction. Concern for job satisfaction appears to be related to the discussion of personal need. A very substantial number of the teachers (89%) noted "motivational" factors influenced their job satisfaction. Of particular importance were comments demonstrating the need for achievement, recognition, challenge, responsibility, and a sense of personal growth. In contrast, a few teachers emphasized factors such as hourly schedule, working conditions, job security, or income. These latter factors are frequently the source of one's unhappiness but seldom a basis for real job satisfaction or job happiness.

Thus, satisfaction appears to have implications for at least three major concerns of administrators. First, it is important to assess one's basis of job satisfaction in past work opportunities. At least in the study, the sense of autonomy and opportunity to affect one's own achievement was a key factor in their selection of teaching as a career. Second, the working environment of the teacher (i.e., classroom to the total school) can take many forms. The type of environment can be influenced greatly by the administrators' policies and procedures. Given the teachers' high value for achievement,

challenge, and responsibility, efforts to create an environment where the satisfaction of these desires can be realized is very important. Finally, these job satisfaction factors clearly have implications for supervision. There seems to be a basis for the mutual development of objectives and the establishment of review and supervision activities which emphasize goal attainment of the teachers along lines closely paralleling their job satisfaction needs.

Summary

The recommendations for recruiting and selecting teachers, setting the instructional environment, and supervising teachers was drawn from the findings of an intensive study of 35 T & I teachers. Job satisfaction which had a strong motivational factor emphasis and personal needs which were idealistically oriented were very influential in the teachers' mid-life career change decision. What we have tried to accomplish in this paper is to interpret the results of the study in light of their implications for education practice.

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OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

OBJECTIVE

Trade and industrial occupational programs require teachers who are occupationally competent. Because of this premise, all states select teachers on the basis of their occupational expertise in spite of the possible limitation of little formal education in a teacher education program. Thus, provisions are made to hire teachers from industrial settings. A substantial number of teachers enter the profession after working a number of years in industry. The purpose of this research was to identify the factors leading into a mid-life career change for these people into vocational trade and industrial programs.

PERSPECTIVE

Trade and industrial programs depend on recruitment efforts to attract practitioners into teaching. Annually, many people from industry elect to move into teaching roles. From the teacher's perspective, this transition from working in skilled occupations to working in public education settings constitutes an important career change. Given the age of most of these teachers, this transition frequently involves what has come to be known as a mid-life career change. While mid-life career change is well documented, the specific factors effecting the selection of a teaching career are less well known.

FINDINGS

The study's findings appeared to fall within two broad theoretical constructs. First, the decision to change appeared to be related in large part to need theory primarily framed by Maslow (1954). The second construct of importance was the influence to teach which appeared to be closely related to job satisfaction and agree most consistently with the Herzberg (1966) job satisfaction theory which distinguishes between hygiene and motivational factors.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of these findings will be developed in the following sections and handouts will be available which provide insight into how this information can be used for managing occupational programs. The results suggest several perspectives for educational practices. Both the change stimuli and the reasons for choosing education, characterize the teacher as a person who is largely driven toward an occupation offering a greater sense of personal achievement. Suggestions are offered which can affect recruitment, selection, and the administrators' influence over the work environment.

FINDINGS

WHY CHANGE CAREERS • • • PERSONAL NEEDS

A diverse array of needs were evident by the teachers' responses. While one might expect the usual economic conditions (e.g., laid-off, medical reasons, need for greater income), the majority of the teachers reflected needs which were much more idealistic in emphasis (e.g., self-improvement, desire to work with young people, looking for a challenge, trying something new, etc.). Understanding the importance of personal need will provide perspective on a person's long term potential for teaching. Clearly, the need for personal satisfaction is important for the mid-life job change and the person often has a clear perspective on the importance of this need.

Internal reasons: the Idealistic Circumstances 48% of the people had experienced a strong inner examination and chose to change jobs.

•Self-improvement	13%
•Enjoy working with young people	8%
•Just decided to try teaching	8%
•Taught nite class - post secondary	8%
•Thought I could do a better job	5%
•Teaching was something always wanted to try	3%
•Looking for a challenge	3%

External reasons: the Economic Circumstances 30% of the people were forced to consider a job change due to circumstances beyond their control.

•Medical	14%
•Retirement	5%
•Laid-off-out of work	5%
•Bankrupt-plant closed	3%
•Income improvement	3%

Personal reasons: the Personal Circumstances 22% of the people chose to change jobs in order to prevent frustration.

•Jobs with less pressure	9%
•More free time - different hours of work	8%
•Move closer to home	5%

Questions:

•How do you feel about your job?
•How do you feel about the working conditions of your job?
•What do you think about the supervision you receive in your job?
•How do you get along with your fellow workers?

FINDINGS

WHY CHOOSE TEACHING • • • SATISFACTION

Concern for job satisfaction appears to be related to the Motivational-Hygiene theory of Herzberg (1966). His work involved extensive interviews where pople were asked what made them unhappy or dissatisfied on the job, as well as, what made them happy or satisfied on the job. He concluded that when people felt good about their job, factors called "motivators" were evident. These motivators seemed to be part of the job itself, rather than in the working environment. These motivators include the need for achievement, recognition, increased responsibility, challenging work, and growth and development. However, when people felt dissatisfied about their job, there seemed to be "hygiene factors" evident. These hygiene factors seem to be part of the work environment, rather than part of the job. These hygiene factors include the policies of the administration, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relations, money, security, and status. It appears that people were searching for ways of self-expression and self-actualization once they have obtained the basic needs. As you can see, a substantial number of teachers (89%) noted "motivational" factors influenced their job selection.

Motivational factors: 89% of the people were attracted to the field of education because of the motivational factors that are evident in the job itself, not in the environment, such as:

•Achievement or recognition	32%
•Challenge	29%
•Increased responsibility	18%
•Sense of personal growth	10%

Hygiene factors: 11% of the people were attracted to the field of education because of the hygiene factors that are evident in the environment, not in the job itself, such as:

•Better working conditions	4%
•Better hours	4%
•Job security	3%

Questions:

- What does vocational teaching give you that your other job did not?
- Is the job teaching, what you had expected?
- How do you feel when you teach others?
- Did the teaching schedule (nine months of work, 3 months off in summer) influence you to choose vocational teaching?

FINDINGS

TEACHING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

A substantial number of teachers (74.3%) experienced teaching in the industrial environment. Usually this experience involved mentoring other employees or providing inhouse short term task specific training. What appears to be a critical factor, however, was the insight the future teachers acquired from this experience. In all cases, they mentioned the positive impact this experience had in helping them assess their interest in teaching. Thus, the encounter served as a sample or trial experience which later came to influence the major career change by suggesting the kind of people centered contact and learning interaction with the teacher's pivotal role which is so fundamental to the teaching-learning process.

Most of the people interviewed, felt that their previous work experience (teaching in the private sector) was good preparation for the teaching job they later acquired. They also felt that since they were older, relative to the age of the students, they did not have to go through the process of identification with the students. They more closely fit the role model of the teacher/student relationship.

Training Experience:

- Not involved in training 25%
- Training was primary job responsibility 11%
- Training was secondary job responsibility
  - Responsible for new employees 43%
  - Responsible for existing employees 17%
  - Responsible for apprenticeship training 3%

Questions:

- Did teaching in the private sector improve your quality of work?
- Did teaching in the private sector improve your attitude toward your job?
- What do you like about training others?
- Do you feel you have accomplished something when others learn? Why?
- Do you feel your skill level of work has improved by training others? Why?

IMPLICATIONS

INTERVIEWING

Educational and/or occupational information can be gathered by means of a person-to-person interview. Only the personal interview has the ability to go beneath the surface to determine reasons, motives, and attitudes thereby receiving information about complex subjects through the use of additional questions. The interview is not only used to clarify the job, but also to define the expected performance standards in the job. The key to successful interview is in the preparation. You should have a mental outline of what you want to accomplish during the interview session. Such an outline might include:

Opening:

- Set the climate by being appropriately sociable and put the applicant at ease
- Explain the purpose of the interview (i.e., it is a joint discussion to help make an administrative decision.)
- Explain the structure of the interview (i.e., question about previous work experiences, questions about teaching, and answer any questions applicant might have)

These sample interview questions might help administrators structure questions which might explore a person's needs in relationship to the opportunity to fulfill this need through teaching. They are grouped according to the structure stated above.

Previous Work Experience:

- What did you like best about your favorite job?
- How do you maintain competency in your area of expertise?
- What have you done to coordinate activities and establish priorities to maintain work flow?
- What have you done at some of your jobs that show initiative?
- Have you ever had to define a problem and then assess the impact of the solution?

Teaching Vocational Education:

- Give an example on how you can encourage a positive attitude in fellow workers.
- What personal characteristics do you think are necessary to be flexible and adapt to emotional pressures?
- How have you demonstrated effective use of time?
- What can you do to establish an effective working relationship with your supervisor?
- How do you determine the progress of your students?
- How do you handle suggestions from supervisors and fellow teachers?
- What is your main weakness?

Closing:

Close the interview by answering any question from the applicant. Be sure to give your entire attention to the person while they are talking. Wait patiently. Do not interrupt a person while they are expressing themselves.

IMPLICATIONS

RECRUITMENT

Recruiting and retaining people into vocational education is the responsibility of the faculty as well as administration. Retention of these people means accepting them as they are and motivating them to become better by giving them the support they need to succeed. People relationships are critical in recruitment, especially to people who have made such a diverse change in careers.

The industrial work experience these people have encountered carries valuable information for recruitment and selection by administrators. It is important to assess one's basis of job satisfaction in past work opportunities. The sense of autonomy and opportunity to affect one's own achievement was a key factor in their selection of teaching as a career. This insight about the need to fulfill one's self through work represents one line of thought to help administrators design a recruitment plan.

How to Recruit:

- Word of mouth is definitely the best method (i.e., call over the public address in school ask if anyone knows someone with qualifications)
- Radio spot announcements on local radio stations
- Run ads in local newspapers
- Pass out flyers to students in vocational classes
- Mailings to selected people on advisory committees, chamber of commerce, etc.

Are You Ready to Recruit?

- Is faculty/administration actively involved in addressing change?
- Top notch programs and people are drawing cards-Are you promoting excellence in your school?
- Are you promoting vocational education as a "people place" supported by training and career recycling?
- Do your public contacts reflect the image of your school and professionalism?
- Are your school, programs, teachers visible to the community?

IMPLICATIONS

WORK ENVIRONMENT

There are factors that effect, directly or indirectly, the way an individual responds in his environment. Occupational groups (vocational teachers) receive different gratifications which require different abilities, values, and attitudes. Because of this, occupations can be viewed as really "ways-of-life" and the work environment as an extension of the characteristics of those who work in them rather than a set of work skills. The working environment of the teacher (i.e., classroom to the total school) can take many forms. The type of environment can be influenced greatly by the administrators' policies and procedures. Given the teachers' high value for achievement, challenge, and responsibility, efforts to create an environment where the satisfaction of these desires can be realized is very important. These job satisfaction factors clearly have implications for supervision. Reinforcement begins when administrators' give credit to teachers for their achievement. The reinforcement of mutually developed goals and objectives, closely parallels and emphasizes the job satisfaction needs of teachers. Supportive behavior by administrators seem to provide vocational teachers the lattitude they need to perform their job.

Recognition:

- Special teachers day (i.e., special meal in cafeteria, awards, pins etc.)
- Teachers honored in school newspaper
- Special bulletin board for teachers of the week or month
- Local radio and newspaper spot announcements of accomplishments
- Special recognition to teachers if any of their students excel in special areas

Self-direction:

- Allow teachers to become involved in upgrading their curriculum
- Encourage personal development
- Allow time for self-enrichment activities
- Encourage facility planning and development

Affecting others:

- Encourage teachers to train others (besides their own students)
- Allow teachers to share their personal motivations and attitudes
- Encourage teachers to share areas of personal fulfillment

People oriented:

- Stress people needs as well as job skills
- Intergrade the needs of students with the needs of teachers
- Allow openness with students and teachers to stress personal satisfaction

IMPLICATIONS

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a form of reinforcement if it is used to help individuals understand themselves, not only in terms of ability, but also in terms of interest, values, and personal characteristics. Accurate assessment is essential in order to facilitate planning and execute change. Administrators should not assume the role of sitting in judgment up on the teacher. They should however, take an open and constructive approach in their discussions with teachers. Administrators should view assessment as an opportunity to positively influence the work habit and performance of teachers. In addition, administrators should recognize that teachers may be prepared to share problems or suggestions from which they (the administrators) may benefit by encouraging open and honest discussions. Improvement is almost always a mutual activity. When a teacher knows that the administrator accepts his or her share of the responsibility for improved performance, they (the teachers) are more likely to approach performance improvement with greater confidence and motivation.

Assessment statements:

- Assessment should be a productive, nonthreating relationship with emphasis on guiding, supporting, and stimulating (i.e., it is not counseling or therapy).
- Assessment is a helping relationship used to influence people to change; it involves trust, openness, willingness to listen, it need not be judgmental but supportive.
- Assessment should be conducted similar to a mentor (or guide) relationship. That is, it serves in order to facilitate the realization of one's goals. This relationship is very important it may be as a teacher (instructing), or as a sponsor (aiding in career advancement), or a guide into the occupational and social world of one's field.
- As a person grows and gains in self-confidence, the role of assessment changes into another area of guidance and/or development.